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STATE FOR NEA/MAG (MHARRIS)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [TS](#)
SUBJECT: DEFENDING THE DEFENDERS INITIATIVES PRESENTED TO
TUNISIA

REF: A. STATE 200959

[B](#). STATE 196666
[C](#). TUNIS 2949

[1](#). (SBU) In a meeting with MFA Director General Hatem Atallah on December 28, Charge presented new USG initiatives to support human rights defenders (refs A and B). Atallah replied that the MFA would read over the new initiatives carefully. He acknowledged that the USG and Tunisia had different perspectives on the issue of NGOs. Charge mentioned recent crackdowns on NGOs and harassment of NGO activists by the GOT (ref C), and emphasized that the USG is opposed to any restrictions on freedom of association and assembly. Atallah said it is the policy of the GOT that NGOs have a role to play, not just in development and social areas, but also in the political sphere. He said there was "no problem" as long as NGOs are in compliance with relevant Tunisian law guiding the funding and activity of associations. NOTE: On December 23, the MFA sent a dipnote to all diplomatic missions reminding them of relevant law pertaining to funding of NGOs. END NOTE.

[2](#). (U) Post distributed a press release on the new initiatives which has also been forwarded to relevant NGO contacts. Post will continue to look for opportunities to highlight and implement these new initiatives.
GODEC